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Big Changes Ahead for Foster Teens

It's no easy task to grow up. It's especially fraught with snares when you are 18 but have the emotional capacity of someone much younger. Then add a lack of confidence coupled with beliefs and behavioral patterns that often make it tough to tend to your own emotional needs much less pay the bills, buy adequate clothing and school supplies, complete your education, avoid early parenting, and escape destructive or demeaning relationships. Every teen and young adult need someone they can trust and depend upon to guide them through the tumultuous years when they enter the adult world and all the responsibility that goes with it. Foster youth, in particular, often need a sound network of support for emotional strength and everyday guidance.



AB12 Allows Youth to Remain in Care Longer

For the several months, Jeremiah's Promise has collaborated with the San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA) and other local nonprofits who provide care to foster youth in order to prepare for the implementation of AB12 in January. This law allows youth to remain in the foster care system as "non-minor dependents" until 19 years old in 2012, 20 years old in 2013 and 21

years old in 2014 unless state funding diminishes in the third year.

Our 501(c)(3) has served on San Mateo County's HSA workgroups to offer insight on the mentoring and educational components of the implementation.

At this time, the county is strongly encouraging youth to remain in the system after 18 and will make them work harder to opt out of care. For the youth who stay in the foster system, requirements must be met for them to receive up to \$776 per month in housing stipends (with an additional \$400 if they are parenting). The conditions are that they must do at least one of the following: complete high school or its equivalency; enroll at least half-time in college, community college or a vocational education program; be employed at least 80 hours a month; participate in a program/activity designed to remove barriers to employment; or be unable to do any of these because of a medical condition.

Those emerging adults remaining in foster care must sign an agreement to see their case manager once a month and report their transitional living plan progress to the court every six months.

The broad requirements listed above imply an even more compelling and urgent need for mentoring and workshops at the high school and college level to prepare these young adults for the challenges of living independently.

Foster teens often face issues that may derail their success, such as arrested development emotionally, learning disabilities, lack of academic preparedness, a tendency toward younger parenting ages, a high incidence of involvement in negative or abusive relationships and the inability to remain in stable housing situations.

While they will have monthly case management, our experience with these vulnerable and emotionally fragile youth has been that daily interactions with a positive support system are vital for them to sustain their progress.

Jeremiah's Promise has developed a curriculum that our nonprofit will test in a Fremont high school in January. The plan is then to roll out the supportive, interactive series to local community colleges and potentially to other high schools for their foster youth. These workshops address the "need behind the need" that often causes foster teens to drop out of school rather than to confront real or perceived challenges. The workshops are a two-year program entitled, "You Have What It Takes" - a theme very few foster youth hear as they grow up. The workshops are offered at no charge to foster youth at our local community colleges and are designed to promote success professionally, academically, relationally and personally. The aim is to prepare these youth to bridge from a traumatized youth experience to a meaningful adulthood.

In addition the youth on campus will be able to form a network of support among their peers to assist in the development and accountability of their goals.

Our mentoring program also is available to these young adults to ensure they have at least one, permanent, healthy adult in their lives to enhance their chances of success.

The Best High School Volunteer EVER!



Sarena Bui

Sarena Bui is a 17-year-old senior at Irvington High School who phoned us unexpectedly this fall asking if she could volunteer for our nonprofit to earn community service hours, a requirement for her graduation. We got a lot more than we expected.

Sarena attends our planning sessions for the College Workshop Series each Monday night. She then takes the information we have discussed and shops it among fellow students, teachers and counselors to gauge their interest and receive feedback. This has been an enormous help to us as we strive to develop engaging and relevant material to meet the needs of a similar age group. The response to date has been positive (thankfully). "Several of the kids liked the topics so much they wanted to carpool to the colleges and sit in on them," reported the creative, hard-working teen. She even paved the way for us to present the material to one of her classes during school for a trial run before launching at local community colleges.

Sarena, who previously worked with her class to improve conditions for the needy in Qatar through an ambitious fundraising effort, is planning to major in business. She has chosen some prestigious schools to attend. We think they would be crazy to turn her down. This lady is going to leave her mark on society.

Training That ID's Part of Self That Has to Go



While our training program provides a comprehensive approach to equip mentors for this unique and complex population, the thrust of each session is to identify YOUR belief structures, behaviors and attitudes, as well as, and any issue that is best moved out of the way to serve older foster youth in a clear, objective manner.

Phone or email us at info@jeremiahspromise.org if you would like to join our Mentor Team. We require interviews and background checks for each applicant. The training is once a week for six weeks. All sessions must be attended. Make up sessions are offered. We will set new training dates in early 2012. Check our website later for details.

Our phone number is 650.967.1047, ext. 102. See our website for the application at <http://www.jeremiahspromise.org/forms.html>

Our Donors, Volunteers Are Way Beyond Cool!

Without the tireless and dedicated support of our volunteers, there is no way we could have developed the extent of curriculum we have accomplished for our College Workshop Series. Nor could we have carried out a comprehensive training and development program for our mentors. We also commend our Board of Directors, comprised of volunteers, for their diligence and hard work. We thank each of our volunteers for their enthusiasm, intelligent and creative suggestions, commitment and high energy. We thank them also for not shirking the "grunt" work that often comes with the territory.

There are those who come to the office each week to pray for our needs, and they are appreciated beyond measure. Thank you to the nonprofits and ministries who have partnered with us to ensure our older foster youth are not abandoned nor forgotten. Last and definitely not least, a hearty thank you also goes out to our donors who keep us moving forward. It truly takes a community working in unison to form and shape each one us, particularly the vulnerable population of youth we serve.

May You Each Have A Merry Christmas and A Truly Blessed New

Year!!!

